

CABINET – 20 DECEMBER 2016

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Question received from the following Members:

1. From Councillor Howson to Councillor Nimmo Smith

“ How many faults with streetlights have been reported each month since the termination of the contract on street lighting; cumulatively how many faults with street remained outstanding at 31st December?”

Answer

“There are approximately 66,000 streetlights, illuminated signs and bollards, subway lights etc in Oxfordshire. At the end of December there were 1,694 faults, which is just 2.5 per cent. This is broadly what we would expect at this point in the calendar year as there are more faults reported in the late autumn and winter months than at other times of the year. Therefore 97.5 per cent of streetlights/illuminated signs etc in Oxfordshire are in full working order and our interim contractor is working hard on the list of current faults.

Month`	Issued	Completed
April	375	49
May	228	44
June	213	53
July	214	161
August	378	504
September	252	140
October	948	225
November	702	356
December	490	574
January		
February		
March		
Totals	3800	2106

2. From Councillor Howson to Councillor Nimmo Smith

“Can the Cabinet member provide a date when a new contract dealing with street lighting will be signed?”

Answer

“Work on preparing a new contract is well underway and the procurement is programmed to take place to enable award at the start of September 2017.

However, it is worth pointing out that the council is not without a streetlighting contract, last year the council appointed an interim contractor – Amey.

Amey have been working on emergency repairs since mid-June which is a much better situation than we envisaged back in the spring. That is why we have a number of faults awaiting repair that is not dissimilar to what we'd expect in most normal years in mid-Winter."

3. From Councillor Tanner to Councillor Tilley

"Donnington Doorstep is an independent family centre in my division which until 2015/16 received an extremely helpful £60,000 a year from the County Council to part fund Doorstep's drop-in stay-and-play work. It has not proved possible for Doorstep to replace all of the County Council funding in one go. Doorstep is therefore being forced to reduce its drop-in service to just one day a week from February 2017.

However the Doorstep board (of which I am treasurer) is confident that in time we will be able to obtain sufficient extra income from trusts and the local community. Will the Cabinet member ask the cross-party group of councillors to look again at whether it is possible for Donnington Doorstep to obtain some transition funding from the £1 million set aside by the County Council for the purpose of supporting stay-and-play and other activities in the now voluntary children's centres?"

Answer

"I appreciate the position that Donnington Doorstep finds itself in and sympathise with the difficult times that the voluntary sector as a whole are experiencing. You will be aware that we previously commissioned a service from Donnington Doorstep under contract which came to an end in March 2016.

Council discussed the transition fund at its meeting on the 12th July with the motion resolved unanimously as: Council continues to support the general principle that those in greatest need should have the highest priority. However, Council regrets that it has been compelled to abandon the concept of universal provision offered by our children's centres in Oxfordshire as a result of the Government's cuts in Local Authority Funding.

In the meantime, Council is aware that, as a result of the focus of the most needy children and families in our county, there will be large areas – particularly in the West which now have no Children's Centre buildings – the same areas likely to suffer most from rural isolation as the council removes bus subsidies.

Ensuring that there were some compensation for these areas was a key statement agreed by Council in its February budget. Council therefore

believes it is now essential that the effects of the loss of Children's Centres, in these areas is compensated for by:

1. Offering active support to the parents, volunteers and parish councils taking over or hoping to take over the vacated centres;
2. Persuading district Councils to join us in giving as much support to these bodies as possible;
3. That the £1m Transition Fund agreed at the February budget should be committed to these areas to achieve the above.

In addition to the above Cabinet agreed the panel Terms of Reference and Grant Criteria on 20th February with the guidance 'to provide pump priming grants for establishing universal provision of children's services in communities.

The panel chairman Cllr Stratford advised that the application was declined for funding on the basis that this did not meet the criteria of the 12 July in that these services were outside of those offered by our centres.

I feel it is clear that the discussion at council was for supporting those groups to take over vacated centres as outlined in number one and to direct the transition fund to these areas as outlined in number three. I am aware that Donnington Doorstep have resubmitted their proposal and that the Cabinet will be considering the recommendations of the cross-party group when it meets in February."

4. Councillor Williams to Councillor Tilley

"Would the Portfolio Holder be willing to restore the £60,000 grant withdrawn by the County Council to Donnington Doorstep Family Centre. The reason being that this Childrens Centre being a separate trust is not part of the local authority network of provision and therefore cannot benefit from the concession on rents recently granted by the Council to Children's Centres."

Answer

In early 2013, Donnington Doorstep, following an open tender process, was awarded a contract by the Council to deliver the following services:

1. Two Stay & Play sessions per week to support the work of East Oxford Children's Centre services
2. Outreach support for families (up to 10 at any one time) who find it difficult to access Children's Centre services, working in partnership with Florence Park Children's Centre.

Agreed cost was just over £60k per annum.

The contract started on 1st July 2013 and ran in the first instance for two years to 30th June 2015. The contract was extended in October 2014, to run to 31st March 2016 when the contract ended

There is no budget identified in the Children Education and Family budget 2017 / 18 to commission providers such as Donnington to provide stay and play sessions.

Donnington Doorstep would not be eligible for concession on rent as this concession is only available to community groups delivering from OCC .